

VIRTUOUS



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*A Study for Ladies  
of Every Age*

NANCY WILSON

Nancy Wilson, *Virtuous: A Study for Ladies of Every Age*  
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## ❧ PREFACE ❧

**T**his is a small group of lessons on Christian virtues that I have used to lead Bible studies for junior high, high school, college aged, and older women. It seems to me that if God wants us to be diligent in adding virtue to our lives, it is helpful and necessary to give thought to what that means. So I have isolated some biblical virtues in order to discuss what the Bible says about each one, and I have included some thoughts on application to help us grow in our understanding of each topic. Over the years women have asked me for help in leading small group studies. I hope this little collection will also be of use for that purpose, so I have included some discussion questions for guiding your interaction. I suggest you go over all

the Bible verses and text of each chapter together as a group, discussing as you go. Then when you have finished, you can turn to the discussion questions at the end of the chapter. These particularly target application. You may find that you have already discussed these things as you went through the chapter, and other questions may occur to you. You are bound to notice that some verses appear more than once. That's simply because they apply to more than one virtue, so I have referred to them accordingly.

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 1:5–8)

This exhortation in 2 Peter is what first prompted me to think about what it means to be actively pursuing virtue. If we are increasing in these things the apostle mentions, he says the result is fruitfulness in the knowledge of Christ. So this is the best kind of endeavor for all Christian women. Our goal is to grow in our faith and love for God. My prayer is that this little study will help us get there.





## WHAT IS VIRTUE?

**W**omen of all ages sometimes struggle with understanding their calling and purpose in life. But God has a good purpose for each one of us. In this short book we are going to look at one important aspect of the calling of every Christian, and that is to be diligently engaged in adding virtue to our lives. A virtuous woman is a woman who exhibits godly character traits. So virtue is about ethical behavior, and it's about our character. The outside (the good things we do) must spring from what's inside, and those two must be consistent. If we are trying to "be good" without a godly character, we won't be able to keep it up for long. But if we have been renewed by the Holy Spirit in Christ, we will necessarily work out what He has worked in. Of course it is possible for a person who has received grace

and forgiveness to start to slide. Therefore, we are to *pursue* virtue and not just assume it.

Feminine virtue includes a toughness that we may not normally associate with it. Boaz told Ruth, “All the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman” (Ruth 3:11). This word “virtuous” is the feminine equivalent of a Hebrew phrase translated “man of great wealth” (*Geneva Study Bible*). In other words, a woman with this kind of reputation has influence and moral authority; she has standing in her community. She is a woman of stature. We might think of some of the “leading women” of the community referred to in Acts 17:4, who “joined Paul and Silas.” And Proverbs 12:4 says that “An excellent wife is the crown of her husband.” An “excellent wife” is translated literally as “a wife of valor.” So I think we can safely say that all virtue must include a manly kind of courage. Women would do well to think of themselves in this way, rather than assuming that a virtuous woman is a retiring, Victorian stereotype who shrinks away from getting her hands dirty.

Virtues are good qualities that God’s Word defines for us. In the world, some virtues may fall out of favor, and unbelievers can call evil good and good evil. But for the Christian woman, life is much clearer. God’s Word is straightforward and not subject to fads and shifts. So let’s

consider a few Scriptures that teach us about the pursuit of virtue.

### OUR BIBLICAL TEXTS AND A LITTLE COMMENTARY

Paul tells us in Philippians to find some virtue and think about it: “. . .if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Phil. 4:8). Virtue must be a good thing; it must be praiseworthy or we would not be commanded to fill our mind with it. Finding out what is virtuous is a worthy endeavor, and we should therefore be pleased to undertake the study of such a topic.

Not only are we *to think* about virtue, we are to diligently *pursue* it.

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 1:5–8)

We are to add virtue to our faith. When we are active Christians, giving ourselves to the pursuit of holiness, God has promised that we will be fruitful in our Christian lives.

But we have to be able to say that these things really are ours, and that we have them in abundance. We can't expect God to bless us the same way if our lives are characterized more by vice than by virtue. No, if we overflow ("abound") with virtue, He will make us bear fruit.

It is of primary importance for us to know and remember that *He is the One* making us fruitful. It is not we ourselves who accomplish this. "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Cor. 15:10). Paul brags that he has worked harder than all the other apostles. But he is quick to add, "Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

If we think we can just enroll in a program to attain virtue and get a diploma in a few months, we are seriously mistaken. Without the grace of God, none of our labor is worth anything. So as we go through and discuss each of these virtues, we must be keenly aware that our pursuit of holiness is all of grace or it is nothing at all. In fact, it is less than nothing. Without God enabling us to study, to pray, to think about these things, to work to apply what we learn, nothing will happen. This will be a waste of time. But if we believe that He works in what we then work out, if we apply ourselves to

be diligent to learn, then He has promised to bless us more abundantly than we can imagine. This is where our faith is put to work. We pursue godliness, trusting that God will by His Spirit do far more than all we can ask or think.

I have rounded up a handful of biblical qualities that we could call virtues. I do not pretend that this is an exhaustive list! Far from it. Even as I assembled this, I thought of more. This collection is just to get us started.

In all these things God is central. He is the only One who is truly holy and virtuous, and He calls us to imitate Him. This would be impossible had He not sent His Son to redeem us and make us new creatures. And then He gives us His Spirit so we can obey Him. Pursuing virtue is all about God from start to finish.

### ❧ QUESTIONS ❧

1. What qualities come to mind when you think of the word “virtue”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How do we meditate on virtuous things? When do we meditate on virtuous things?

3. What prevents us from pursuing virtue?
  
4. What things distract us from a virtuous life?
  
5. What does the world hold to be virtuous? Can you think of some virtues the world holds dear that are consistent with biblical living? Some that are not?